

Stories &
Incidents

A Call From the Harvest Field



In the
INTEREST OF MALANJE DISTRICT
ANGOLA, AFRICA
Under the
BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS OF
THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

A Call From the Harvest Field

By HERBERT C. WITHEY, Missionary

Is not the man whose picture appears on the cover a bright, intelligent looking fellow? He is an interesting and typical character. His name is Vieira, and he was a qualified African witch doctor, making his living by use of his wits and certain magic arts which he had been at considerable pains to acquire from old and famous professionals, and which gave him no little prestige in the eyes of his fellow natives. The truth and spirit of God, however, entered his heart, and he was converted, made public renunciation and exposure of his former ways, and became an unpaid but effective helper at one of the Mission out-stations. He is here seen blowing an eland horn to call the people to Sunday service in the grass thatched chapel which shows behind him.

We would his call might sound across the great water, and reach the hearts of friends able to help a band of worthy men, native workers on the Malanje District, who are seeking to hold up the banner of the cross among their people, and who at this time are in circumstances of great testing and need.

To mention some of them, there is Coimbra Ngola, a staunch and faithful man of the royal family of the old Angola kingdom which has never been subdued. He might be a big chief among his tribe, as another backslidden worker actually is, but like Moses he esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches. He has been in the midst of war the past year, fighting between government soldiers and de-

fiant natives, burning of villages, etc., going on in sight of his door, but he has not been harmed.

Then there is Daniel Mande, sold into native slavery from the far Luba country, then re-sold to the more despotic white trader and planter because having heard and believed the Gospel, he refused to give up his hope in Jesus, even when threatened with death. As the slave of a depraved and godless Portuguese trader in the big town of Dondo, he was so fond of the name of Jesus as to be dubbed (unusual of the term) "Jesuit," and so earnest in teaching others, that his own exasperated master called him the "apostle of the blacks."

A characteristic glimpse of him is caught as later, redeemed from slavery and a mission worker, he is visiting a big heathen village where a great crowd is gathered in the spirit of excited abandon, and a dance is going on to the accompaniment of the noisy tomtoms. They wave him away when he tries to get their attention; no time now for his "words." They are bent on a feast and a blow-out. But he is not to be downed and pushing into their midst holding aloft his Kimbundu gospel, he cries above the din, "The book! the book! I've come to tell you the words of God in the book." And by sheer force of personality he makes them quiet down and give him a hearing.

His resourcefulness was shown at another time when on a trip in this same region. The natives of a village called Ngolo had shown interest in his message, and a desire for more instruction. A deputation from there, ten miles from home, found Daniel at the town of Kituxikia Kalunga ("Sin of Death") the name of a big chief. Daniel was on his way home then, and would not go to Ngolo again for three months. At Kituxi's, however, he had a better instructed disciple, a man who had relatives at Ngolo, and who was accustomed to go there

visiting about once a week. "Here," said Daniel, turning to this man in the presence of the Ngolo deputation, and with the air of a bishop, "I appoint you to teach these people what you have learned, every time you go to Ngolo." Then taking a piece of newspaper from his pocket he tore it into twelve pieces or tickets, and giving them to the Ngolo men he said, "You keep these and every time he comes and teaches you you give him one ticket, and when I come again I want to find the twelve tickets all in the Kituxi man's possession in token that he has fulfilled his charge." The arrangement worked.

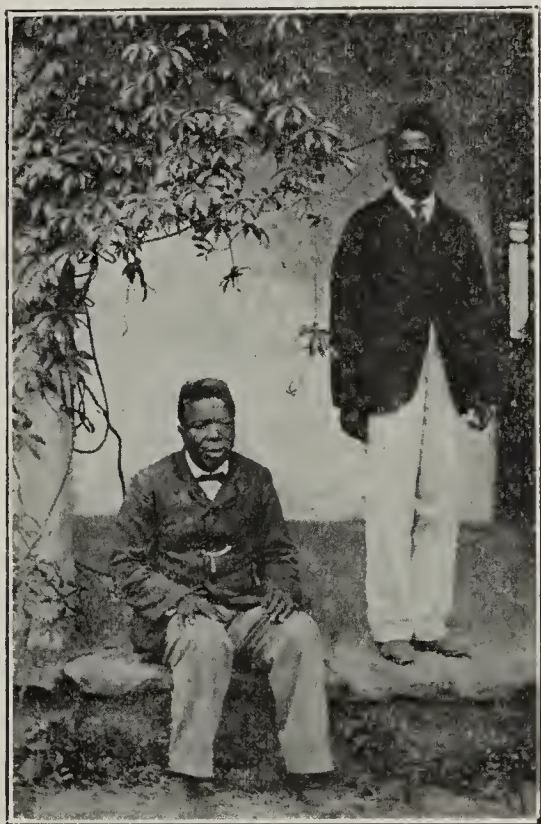
Another worker is Antonio Vieira (not the one in the picture) who was only a house servant, but one who like Bishop Bashford's Chinese servant always replied to any proposition put up to him, "Can do!" He went to school while doing his work and fitted himself to become a good teacher and evangelist, and is now in charge of a native station, a new place where he needs help in putting up necessary buildings.

Blind Bernardo comes up to mind, with his smiling face and cheerful manner, saying, "I have lost these eyes of the body, but the eyes of my spirit still see clearly." He is ever bringing in bundles of fetishes given up by those who, receiving his testimony, wish now to trust in something better. Led by the hand he follows the trail even to the far interior, telling at every village the story of the Gospel.

Gray-headed Joao Garcia, the Nestor of them all, is another; a man of studious mind and good education, a Christian proved in many a fire, a lay worker in the Missions from 1890 onward, and now for five years an ordained minister. He is the apostle of his native region of Ambaca, to which he went without any guaranteed support when the Gospel was unknown there, and where now are five flour-

ishing cut-stations, most of them manned by young men whom he taught and trained.

Joao Garcia is a strong foe of superstition. At the place where he began work in Ambaca there was a splendid opportunity for irrigation and an all-the-year-round raising of garden crops. But the people of the place would not



Joao Garcia and Mateus Inglez

attempt or help in anything of the kind, because of a superstition that the "Kituta," or

genius of the woodland, and of that particular stream, would grievously plague anyone who interfered with its usual flow. Joao, with his boys, dug a long ditch with their own hands and succeeded in placing several acres of rich ground under a regulated water supply. When, after a year or so, no dire visitation came upon him, the people accepted their lesson, and availed themselves of the boon thus conferred upon them.

Another time Joao was worried by the presence near his station of a sacred tree, held in great awe as the haunt of a great malignant spirit, to whom votive offerings were made and wonderful powers attributed. "Boys," said Joao one day to his pupils, "are you afraid to die? Who will go with me to cut down the sacred tree?"

Several of the boldest volunteered and amid mocking farewells from some, and earnest warnings of calamity from others, they proceeded to the place. Praying to God they chopped down and destroyed the tree. To their apparent discomfiture and confirmation of the prophets of evil, Joao on his return home was taken with violent ague and a high fever that for several days threatened his life, but the few believers continued in earnest prayer to God that he might not die at that time when it would mean such a victory for heathenism, and at length Joao was on his feet again, weak from illness, but with spirit undaunted.

After some years, and right in the midst of great success in this field, he left the work to others who could now carry it on; and himself with most slender resources but with the moral support of the missionaries, started out on a new mission in the regions beyond among untouched barbarians. Here he has had a most discouraging time, he was often hungry and sick, the people would have none of his message, or even allow their children to come to school. Only now after several years' faithful

labor and travail is the opposition beginning to break, and the prospects brighten.

Shall we not stand by such men? Shall they lack the simplest things that are necessary to carry on their work, or even suffer actual want?

These and other workers of the District and Mission, came up to last Conference to meet a situation like this. The season had been poor and crops had failed; a pest had destroyed all the cattle through most of the country; some of our people who had been comparatively well to do, were beggared; the European war and other causes had made prices high; special gifts for the Mission had greatly fallen off. The Bishop had to tell these men that by dint of scraping and contriving, means had been found to pay them their modest stipends to date, but from that day onward no stated amount, or in fact anything at all, could be **guaranteed** them; they must depend largely on themselves, and we would help them as we could. They were asked to take the situation upon their hearts, and say if they had anything to suggest. They consulted and slept over the matter, and then through a chosen spokesman pointed out the fact that some of them had declined commercial positions at as much per month as they got in Christian work in a quarter or half a year, and that upon other occasions they had labored in the Gospel without any assurance of stipend, as proof that they were not mercenary. That they would all go back to their work and do the best they could, help or no help, depending principally on cultivating the soil; and although this would make a difference in their mobility, and amount of work they could do, they would consider themselves just as much under the direction of their Bishop or Superintendent as before.

Despite their brave words these men are

in need, and the work is crippled. Does not the cause appeal to you, Christian friends?

Then there is the work among women. We want to keep two or three Bible women constantly in the field doing house-to-house work with the native women—a very important line of effort.

WILL YOU TAKE A SHARE?

As at present developed, it takes about \$1200 a year to finance the staff of native workers on the Malanje District, or say twenty-four shares at \$50.00 per share. Wanted churches, Sunday schools, leagues, or individuals, who will take a share, or part share, per year for five years. This is part of the regular work of the church, but which is supported only by special gifts. Communicate with Rev. Herbert C. Withey, at present on furlough at 323 N. Curtis Ave., Alhambra, California, or send direct to the Board of Foreign Missions, 150 Fifth Ave., New York City, stating that the gift is for native workers on Malanje District, Angola, Africa.

